

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA

James Anthony Primus,

Petitioner,

vs.

Warden Edsel T. Taylor,

Respondent.

) C/A No. 4:14-3015-JFA-TER

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)REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

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A Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2254 was submitted to the court by a state prison inmate appearing *pro se*. Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §636(b)(1)(B), and D.S.C. Civ. R. 73.02(B)(2)(c), this magistrate judge is authorized to review all pretrial matters in such *pro se* cases and to submit findings and recommendations to the District Court. *See* 28 U.S.C. § § 1915(e); 1915A (as soon as possible after docketing, district courts should review prisoner cases to determine whether they are subject to summary dismissal).

BACKGROUND

James Anthony Primus (“Petitioner”) is currently serving a sentence of imprisonment entered in September of 1998 in Dorchester County following a guilty verdict on charges of kidnapping and assault and battery of a high and aggravated nature. This is the second § 2254 Petition that he has filed in this court seeking to challenge these convictions. *See, e.g.*, Civil Action No. 4:07-2652-PMD. Summary Judgment in favor of Respondent was granted on his first petition. *See Id.* Petitioner’s attempt to appeal from the final outcome in that case was dismissed by the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals on November 3, 2008. *See id.*, *ECF No. 41*.

In the Petition now under review, Petitioner again challenges his underlying state convictions. However, there is nothing in the Petition showing that Petitioner sought and obtained permission

from the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals before filing this successive habeas case attempting to challenge the same state convictions.

INITIAL REVIEW

Under established local procedure in this judicial district, a careful review was made of the *pro se* Petition filed in this case. The review was conducted pursuant to the procedural provisions of 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915, 1915A, and the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996, and in light of the following precedents: *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25 (1992); *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 324-25 (1989); *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519 (1972); *Nasim v. Warden, Md. House of Corr.*, 64 F.3d 951 (4th Cir. 1995); *Todd v. Baskerville*, 712 F.2d 70 (4th Cir. 1983); *Boyce v. Alizaduh*, 595 F.2d 948 (4th Cir. 1979).

This court is required to construe *pro se* petitions liberally. Such *pro se* petitions are held to a less stringent standard than those drafted by attorneys, *Gordon v. Leeke*, 574 F.2d 1147, 1151 (4th Cir. 1978), and a federal district court is charged with liberally construing a petition filed by a *pro se* litigant to allow the development of a potentially meritorious case. *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89 (2007). When a federal court is evaluating a *pro se* petition the petitioner's allegations are assumed to be true. *De'Lonta v. Angelone*, 330 F.3d 630, 630n.1 (4th Cir. 2003). The requirement of liberal construction does not mean that the court can ignore a clear failure in the pleading to allege facts which set forth a claim currently cognizable in a federal district court. *Weller v. Dep't of Soc. Servs.*, 901 F.2d 387, 391 (4th Cir. 1990).

Furthermore, this court is charged with screening Petitioner's lawsuit to determine if "it plainly appears from the petition and any attached exhibits that the petitioner is not entitled to relief in the district court." Rule 4 of Rules Governing Section 2254 Cases in the United States District

Courts; *see* Rule 1(b) of Rules Governing Section 2254 Cases in the United States District Courts (a district court may apply these rules to a habeas corpus petition not filed pursuant to § 2254). Following the required initial review, it is recommended that the Petition submitted in this case be summarily dismissed.

DISCUSSION

If a petition is frivolous or patently absurd on its face, entry of dismissal may be made on the court's own motion without the necessity of requiring a responsive pleading from the government. *See Raines v. United States*, 423 F.2d 526, 529 (4th Cir. 1970). Chapter 153 of Title 28 of the United States Code provides a statutory framework for federal post-conviction relief from judgments of conviction entered in federal and state courts. Under this framework, individuals convicted of crimes in state courts seek federal habeas corpus relief through 28 U.S.C. § 2254. *See In re Vial*, 115 F.3d 1192, 1194 (4th Cir. 1997) (footnote omitted). On April 24, 1996, the President of the United States signed into law the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 (the "AEDPA") which, in part, amended Chapter 153. The AEDPA effected a number of substantial changes regarding the availability of federal post-conviction relief to individuals convicted of crimes in federal and state courts. Of particular importance here are the provisions of the AEDPA codifying and extending judicially constructed limits on the consideration of second and successive applications for collateral relief. *See Felker v. Turpin*, 518 U.S. 651, 657 (1996).

Under the AEDPA, an individual may not file a second or successive § 2254 petition for a writ of habeas corpus (or the equivalent thereof) without first receiving permission to do so from the

appropriate circuit court of appeals. *See In re Vial*, 115 F.3d at 1194.¹ The “gatekeeping” mechanism created by the AEDPA added section 2244(3)(A) to provide:

Before a second or successive application permitted by this section is filed in the district court, the applicant shall move in the appropriate court of appeals for an order authorizing the district court to consider the application.

The issue of successiveness of a habeas petition may be raised by the court *sua sponte*. *Rodriguez v. Johnson*, 104 F.3d 694, 697 (5th Cir. 1997); *Latimer v. Warden*, NO. 6:10-721-JFA-WMC, 2010 WL 2720912 (D.S.C. July 08, 2010).

The Petition filed in this case should be dismissed as successive because Petitioner’s procedural history in this court, as previously stated, shows that Petitioner has already filed one petition for writ of habeas corpus based on his 1998 convictions in which the court granted summary judgment on the merits of the case in favor of Respondent. Civil Action No. 4:07-2652-PMD. Because Petitioner did not obtain authorization from the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals to file the successive Petition now under review, this court does not have jurisdiction to consider it and it is subject to summary dismissal without service on the Respondent. *See United States v. Winestock*, 340 F.3d 200, 205-06 (4th Cir. 2003); *Moody v. Maynard*, 105 F. App’x 458, 464-65 (4th Cir. 2004).

RECOMMENDATION

Accordingly, it is recommended that the Petition for a Writ of Habeas Corpus in this case be

¹ With authorization, Petitioner may be able to present a claim for the first time in a successive habeas petition where the claim relies on a new rule of constitutional law, *see* 28 U.S.C. § 2244(b)(2)(A), or, if the claim is based on newly discovered evidence, where the Petitioner can make a prima facie showing of both cause and prejudice within the meaning of § 2244(b)(2)(B)(i) and § 2244(b)(2)(B)(ii). *See Evans v. Smith*, 220 F.3d 306, 323 (4th Cir. 2000). Petitioner is advised that “[t]he grant or denial of an authorization by a court of appeals to file a second or successive application shall not be appealable and shall not be the subject of a petition for rehearing or for a writ of certiorari.” § 2244(b)(3)(E).

dismissed *with prejudice* as successive and unauthorized.

Petitioner's attention is directed to the important notice on the next page.

s/ Thomas E. Rogers, III
Thomas E. Rogers, III
United States Magistrate Judge

September 16, 2014
Florence, South Carolina

Notice of Right to File Objections to Report and Recommendation

The parties are advised that they may file specific written objections to this Report and Recommendation with the District Judge. Objections must specifically identify the portions of the Report and Recommendation to which objections are made and the basis for such objections. “[I]n the absence of a timely filed objection, a district court need not conduct a de novo review, but instead must ‘only satisfy itself that there is no clear error on the face of the record in order to accept the recommendation.’” *Diamond v. Colonial Life & Acc. Ins. Co.*, 416 F.3d 310 (4th Cir. 2005) (quoting Fed. R. Civ. P. 72 advisory committee’s note).

Specific written objections must be filed within fourteen (14) days of the date of service of this Report and Recommendation. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); Fed. R. Civ. P. 72(b); *see* Fed. R. Civ. P. 6(a), (d). Filing by mail pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 5 may be accomplished by mailing objections to:

Robin L. Blume, Clerk
United States District Court
Post Office Box 2317
Florence, South Carolina 29503

Failure to timely file specific written objections to this Report and Recommendation will result in waiver of the right to appeal from a judgment of the District Court based upon such Recommendation. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); *Thomas v. Arn*, 474 U.S. 140 (1985); *Wright v. Collins*, 766 F.2d 841 (4th Cir. 1985); *United States v. Schronce*, 727 F.2d 91 (4th Cir. 1984).